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| JULIE CLEMENTS  | DATE          |
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**PATENT APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT**

**FOR**

**CEMENT COMPOSITIONS COMPRISING STRENGTH-ENHANCING LOST  
CIRCULATION MATERIALS AND METHODS OF CEMENTING IN  
SUBTERRANEAN FORMATIONS**

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**ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.:** **HES 2003 IP 011259  
063718.0313**

# **CEMENT COMPOSITIONS COMPRISING STRENGTH-ENHANCING LOST CIRCULATION MATERIALS AND METHODS OF CEMENTING IN SUBTERRANEAN FORMATIONS**

## **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

### **1. Field of the Invention**

[0001] The present invention relates to subterranean cementing operations, and more particularly, to cement compositions comprising strength-enhancing lost circulation materials, and methods of using such cementing compositions in subterranean formations.

### **2. Description of the Related Art**

[0002] Hydraulic cement compositions are commonly utilized in subterranean operations, particularly subterranean well completion and remedial operations. For example, hydraulic cement compositions are used in primary cementing operations whereby pipe strings such as casings and liners are cemented in well bores. In performing primary cementing, hydraulic cement compositions are pumped into the annular space between the walls of a well bore and the exterior surface of the pipe string disposed therein. The cement composition is permitted to set in the annular space, thereby forming an annular sheath of hardened substantially impermeable cement therein that substantially supports and positions the pipe string in the well bore and bonds the exterior surface of the pipe string to the walls of the well bore. Hydraulic cement compositions also are used in remedial cementing operations such as plugging highly permeable zones or fractures in well bores, plugging cracks and holes in pipe strings, and the like.

[0003] Subterranean formations transversed by well bores are often weak, highly permeable, and extensively fractured. In some cases, such formations may be unable to withstand the hydrostatic head pressure normally associated with fluids (*e.g.*, cement compositions and the like) being injected into the formation. In such cases, the hydrostatic pressure may be sufficient to force such fluids into the fractures and/or permeable zones of the formation, which may result in a significant loss of fluid into the formation. This loss of fluid circulation is problematic for a number of reasons. For example, where the loss of circulation occurs during a cementing operation, excessive fluid loss may cause a cement composition to be prematurely dehydrated and may decrease the compressive strength of the cement composition. Excessive fluid loss into the formation may also prevent or reduce bond strength between the set

cement composition and the subterranean zone, the walls of pipe, and/or the walls of the well bore.

[0004] Previous attempts to minimize the loss of circulation into the subterranean formation involved the addition to the cement composition of a variety of additives including, but not limited to, asphaltines, ground coal, cellulosic, plastic materials, and the like. The addition of such additives was an attempt to plug or bridge the fractures and/or the permeable zones in the formation where the treatment fluids are typically lost. However, during a cementing operation, the addition of the lost circulation materials often has been detrimental to the compressive strength of the cement composition because, *inter alia*, such additives do not bond to the cement. Because one function of the cement is to support the pipe string in the well bore, such reduction in the compressive strength of the cement composition is undesirable.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

[0005] The present invention relates to subterranean cementing operations, and more particularly, to cement compositions comprising strength-enhancing lost circulation materials, and methods of using such cementing compositions in subterranean formations.

[0006] An example of a method of the present invention is a method of cementing in a subterranean formation comprising the steps of: providing a cement composition comprising cement, a strength-enhancing lost circulation material, and water; placing the cement composition into a subterranean formation; and allowing the cement composition to set.

[0007] An example of a composition of the present invention is a cement composition comprising: cement, a strength-enhancing lost circulation material, and water.

[0008] The features and advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art upon a reading of the description of the preferred embodiments which follows.

## DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0009] The present invention relates to subterranean cementing operations, and more particularly, to cement compositions comprising strength-enhancing lost circulation materials, and methods of using such cementing compositions in subterranean formations.

[0010] The improved cement compositions of the present invention generally comprise cement, water, and a strength-enhancing lost circulation material. Optionally, other additives suitable for use in conjunction with subterranean cementing operations may be added to these cement compositions if desired. Typically, the cement compositions of the present invention have a density in the range of from about 4 lb/gallon to about 20 lb/gallon. In certain exemplary embodiments, the cement compositions of the present invention have a density in the range of from about 8 lb/gallon to about 17 lb/gallon. One of ordinary skill in the art with the benefit of this disclosure will recognize the appropriate density of the cement composition for a chosen application.

[0011] The water utilized in the cement compositions of the present invention can be fresh water, salt water (*e.g.*, water containing one or more salts dissolved therein), brine (*e.g.*, saturated salt water), or seawater. Generally, the water can be from any source provided that it does not contain an excess of compounds, *e.g.*, dissolved organics, that may adversely affect other components in the cement composition. The density of the water may vary based, *inter alia*, on the salt content. In certain exemplary embodiments, the water has a density in the range of from about 8.3 lb/gallon to about 9.5 lb/gallon. Further, the water may be present in an amount sufficient to form a pumpable slurry. In certain exemplary embodiments, the water is present in the cement compositions in an amount in the range of from about 30% to about 180% by weight of the cement ("bwoc") therein. In certain exemplary embodiments, the water is present in the cement composition in the range of from about 40% to about 90% bwoc therein. In certain exemplary embodiments, the water is present in the cement composition in the range of from about 40% to about 50% bwoc therein. One of ordinary skill in the art with the benefit of this disclosure will recognize the appropriate amount of water for a chosen application.

[0012] Any cements suitable for use in subterranean applications are suitable for use in the present invention. In one embodiment, the improved cement compositions of the present invention comprise a hydraulic cement. A variety of hydraulic cements are suitable for use including those comprised of calcium, aluminum, silicon, oxygen, and/or sulfur which set

and harden by reaction with water. Such hydraulic cements include, but are not limited to, Portland cements, pozzolana cements, gypsum cements, soil cements, calcium phosphate cements, high alumina content cements, silica cements, high alkalinity cements, and mixtures thereof.

[0013] The cement compositions of the present invention further comprise a strength-enhancing lost circulation material. The strength-enhancing lost circulation material may be any material that provides a desired level of lost circulation control from the cement composition into the formation with minimal adverse impact to the compressive strength of the cement composition. Among other things, certain embodiments of the strength-enhancing lost circulation material of the present invention bridge and/or plug fractures and permeable zones in the formation so as to minimize loss of fluid circulation into the formation. Certain exemplary embodiments of the strength-enhancing lost circulation material of the present invention have a density such that they do not rise to the surface of the well bore if circulation of the cement composition should cease. Generally, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material chemically and/or mechanically bonds to the matrix of the cement. Generally, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material may have any particle size distribution that provides a desired level of lost circulation control. In an exemplary embodiment, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material may have a particle size distribution in the range of from about 37 micrometers to about 4,750 micrometers. In an exemplary embodiment, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material is vitrified shale. A variety of vitrified shales are suitable for use including those comprised of silicon, aluminum, calcium, and/or magnesium. In an exemplary embodiment, the vitrified shale may be fine grain vitrified shale whereby the fine vitrified shale particles may have a particle size distribution in the range of from about 74 micrometers to about 4,750 micrometers. An example of a suitable fine grain vitrified shale is "PRESSUR-SEAL® FINE LCM," which is commercially available from TXI Energy Services, Inc., in Houston, Texas. In an exemplary embodiment, the vitrified shale may be coarse grain vitrified shale whereby the coarse vitrified shale particles may have a particle size distribution in the range of from about 149 micrometers to about 4,750 micrometers. An example of a suitable coarse grain vitrified shale is "PRESSUR-SEAL® COARSE LCM," which is commercially available from TXI Energy Services, Inc., in Houston, Texas.

[0014] Generally, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material may be present in the cement compositions in an amount sufficient to provide a desired level of lost circulation control. In one embodiment, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material is present in the cement composition in an amount in the range of from about 1% to about 50% bwoc. In certain exemplary embodiments, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material is present in the cement composition in an amount in the range of from about 5% to about 10% bwoc. One of ordinary skill in the art with the benefit of this disclosure will recognize the appropriate amount of the strength-enhancing lost circulation material for a chosen application.

[0015] Optionally, the cement composition may further comprise a conventional lost circulation material. The conventional lost circulation material may be any material that minimizes the loss of fluid circulation into the fractures and/or permeable zones of the formation. Conventional lost circulation materials typically comprise a variety of materials, which include, but are not limited to, asphaltines, ground coal, cellulosic, plastic materials, and the like. The conventional lost circulation materials may be provided in particulate form. One of ordinary skill in the art with the benefit of this disclosure will recognize the appropriate amount of the conventional lost circulation material for a chosen application.

[0016] Additional additives may be added to the cement compositions of the present invention as deemed appropriate by one skilled in the art with the benefit of this disclosure. Examples of such additives include, *inter alia*, fly ash, silica compounds, fluid loss control additives, a surfactant, a dispersant, an accelerator, a retarder, a salt, mica, fiber, a formation conditioning agent, fumed silica, bentonite, expanding additives, microspheres, weighting materials, a defoamer, and the like. For example, the cement compositions of the present invention may be foamed cement compositions wherein an expanding additive that produces gas within the cement composition has been added in order, *inter alia*, to reduce such composition's density. An example of a suitable expanding additive comprises a blend containing gypsum and is commercially available under the tradename "MICROBOND" from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc. at various locations. One of ordinary skill in the art with the benefit of this disclosure will recognize the proper amount of an expanding additive to use in order to provide a foamed cement composition having a desired density. An example of a suitable fluid loss control additive comprises an acrylamide copolymer derivative, a dispersant, and a hydratable polymer, and is disclosed in commonly owned United States Patent Application

Serial No. 10/608,748 filed on July 21, 2003, the relevant disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. An example of a suitable fly ash is an ASTM class F fly ash which is commercially available from Halliburton Energy Services of Dallas, Texas under the trade designation "POZMIX® A."

[0017] An exemplary embodiment of a cement composition of the present invention comprises cement, a strength-enhancing lost circulation material, and water. An exemplary embodiment of a cement composition of the present invention comprises cement, vitrified shale, and water. An exemplary embodiment of a cement composition of the present invention comprises Texas Lehigh Premium cement, 5% PRESSUR-SEAL® FINE LCM bwoc, and 39.4% water bwoc. Another exemplary embodiment of a cement composition of the present invention comprises Texas Lehigh Premium cement, 5% PRESSUR-SEAL® COARSE LCM bwoc, and 39.4% water bwoc.

[0018] An exemplary embodiment of a method of the present invention comprises providing a cement composition that comprises cement, a strength-enhancing lost circulation material, and water sufficient to form a pumpable slurry; placing this cement composition into a subterranean formation; and allowing the cement composition to set therein. Another exemplary embodiment of a method of the present invention comprises providing a cement composition that comprises cement, vitrified shale, and water sufficient to form a pumpable slurry; placing this cement composition into a subterranean formation; and allowing the cement composition to set therein.

[0019] To facilitate a better understanding of the present invention, the following examples of some of the preferred embodiments are given. In no way should such examples be read to limit the scope of the invention.

#### **EXAMPLE 1**

[0020] Sample cement compositions were prepared by mixing a base cement slurry with a lost circulation material in accordance with the following procedure. The base cement slurry of 16.4 lb/gallon was prepared by mixing Texas Lehigh Premium cement with 39.4% water bwoc. Each sample cement composition was then prepared by mixing the base cement slurry with 5% of a lost circulation material bwoc. Subsequently, each sample cement composition was mixed at 15,000 rpm in a Waring blender for approximately 35 seconds. After sample preparation, a compressive strength test was performed at 80° F and 200° F in



accordance with API Specification 10, RP 8.3, Recommended Practices for Testing Well Cements.

[0021] Sample Cement Composition No. 1 consisted of the base cement slurry. No lost circulation material was included. At 80° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 1 was found to be 1641 psi. At 200° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 1 was found to be 4823 psi.

[0022] Sample Cement Composition No. 2 was prepared by mixing the base cement slurry with 5% of a strength-enhancing lost circulation material bwoc. Specifically, the strength enhancing lost circulation material included was PRESSUR-SEAL® COARSE LCM. At 80° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 2 was found to be 1591 psi. At 200° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 2 was found to be 4351 psi.

[0023] Sample Cement Composition No. 3 was prepared by mixing the base cement slurry with 5% of a strength-enhancing lost circulation material bwoc. Specifically, the strength-enhancing lost circulation material included was PRESSUR-SEAL® FINE LCM. At 80° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 3 was found to be 1560 psi. At 200° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 3 was found to be 5637 psi.

[0024] Sample Cement Composition No. 4 was prepared by mixing the base cement slurry with 5% of a conventional lost circulation material bwoc. Specifically, the conventional lost circulation material included was asphaltine. At 80° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 4 was found to be 1309 psi. At 200° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 4 was found to be 3749 psi.

[0025] Sample Cement Composition No. 5 was prepared by mixing the base cement slurry with 5% of a conventional lost circulation material bwoc. Specifically, the conventional lost circulation material included was ground FORMICA® material. At 80° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 5 was found to be 1165 psi. At 200° F, the compressive strength of Sample Cement Composition No. 5 was found to be 3140 psi.

[0026] A summary of the compressive strength demonstrated by each sample cement composition is depicted in Table 1, below.

**TABLE 1**

| <b>FLUID</b>                       | <b>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH<br/>AT 80° F<br/>(psi)</b> | <b>% CHANGE IN<br/>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH AT<br/>80° F</b> | <b>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH<br/>AT 200° F<br/>(psi)</b> | <b>% CHANGE IN<br/>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH AT<br/>200° F</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Sample Cement Composition<br>No. 1 | 1641   | N/A  | 4823  | N/A   |
| Sample Cement Composition<br>No. 2 | 1591   | -3%  | 4351  | -9%   |
| Sample Cement Composition<br>No. 3 | 1560   | -5%  | 5637  | +17%  |
| Sample Cement Composition<br>No. 4 | 1309   | -20%   | 3749  | -23%  |
| Sample Cement Composition<br>No. 5 | 1165   | -29%   | 3140  | -35%  |

[0027] Thus, the above example demonstrates, *inter alia*, that the cement compositions of the present invention comprising a strength-enhancing lost circulation material provide enhanced compressive strength as compared to cement compositions comprising conventional lost circulation materials.

#### **EXAMPLE 2**

[0028] An additional compressive strength test was performed on another cement composition, Sample Cement Composition No. 6, that was prepared as follows.

[0029] The base cement slurry of 14 lb/gallon was prepared by mixing a 65/35 TXI Standard Cement/POZMIX® A blend with 93.8% water bwoc. Additionally, 9.8% of PRESSUR-SEAL® COARSE LCM bwoc, 0.4% HALAD®-344 additive bwoc, 0.4% bwoc of a fluid loss control additive comprising an acrylamide copolymer derivative, a dispersant, and a hydratable polymer, 0.5% D-AIR™ 3000 bwoc, 0.1% of a free water control agent bwoc, 7% MICROBOND bwoc, and 5% NaCl by weight of water were also blended into the sample cement composition. HALAD®-344 additive is a fluid loss control additive that is commercially

available from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc., at various locations. D-AIR™ 3000 is a defoaming agent that is commercially available from Halliburton Energy Inc., at various locations.

[0030] After Sample Cement Composition No. 6 was prepared, it was pumped into a well bore at 100° F, 1,900 psi for 3 hours and 46 minutes and allowed to set therein. Next, a compressive strength test was performed at 110° F at selected intervals over a 48 hour period in accordance with API Specification 10, RP 8.3, Recommended Practices for Testing Well Cement. A summary of the compressive strength demonstrated by Sample Cement Composition No. 6 at each interval is provided in Table 2, below.

**TABLE 2**

| <b>FLUID</b>                       | <b>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH<br/>AT 6 HOURS<br/>(psi)</b> | <b>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH<br/>AT 12 HOURS<br/>(psi)</b> | <b>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH<br/>AT 24 HOURS<br/>(psi)</b> | <b>COMPRESSIVE<br/>STRENGTH<br/>AT 48 HOURS<br/>(psi)</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Sample Cement Composition<br>No. 6 | 302  | 852   | 1500  | 2280  |

[0031] Thus, the above example demonstrates, *inter alia*, that Cement Composition No. 6, a cement composition of the present invention comprising a strength-enhancing lost circulation material, provides enhanced compressive strength.

[0032] Therefore, the present invention is well-adapted to carry out the objects and attain the ends and advantages mentioned as well as those which are inherent therein. While numerous changes may be made by those skilled in the art, such changes are encompassed within the spirit of this invention as defined by the appended claims.